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The Star-Ledger

Gas could drop to $1.25 a gallon, says expert. A3

THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Shutting down and lining up

Facing the prospect of an open-ended period of being homebound, people line up to shop at Costco in Bridgewater on Wednesday before the store opens, some donning ever-more-familiar face masks. In New Jersey, as elsewhere, restrictions have been instituted on places where the public otherwise gathers in an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus that has relentlessly encompassed the globe. *Ed Murray, NJ Advance Media for The Star-Ledger*

Tourist attraction The Naked Cowboy adds to his skimpy outfit in a mostly empty Times Square. *Victor J. Blue, Getty Images*

Motorists enter Canada from the U.S., but the border will close to nonessential traffic. *Darryl Dyck, Canadian Press*

Virus concerns raised at Rutgers; day care centers to stay open. A17

STATEWIDE

Outbreak a shot in the arm for some N.J. businesses

Sophie Nieto-Munoz *For The Star-Ledger*

Just a few weekends ago, Rob Baron was shopping at Wegmans in Morristown when he came across desolate shelves where toilet paper could once be found.

That's when it clicked for the CEO of Marcal Paper: It was time to ramp up production in Elmwood Park, because the stockpiling was just beginning.

"I had associates texting me photos, saying, 'You won't believe what I just saw at this grocery store,'" Baron said. "We knew it was only going to be a matter of time. That's when I knew this is going to come."

Amid the outbreak of coronavirus across the state and country, New Jersey-based companies are increasing production to meet the needs of consumers who are stocking up to two weeks' worth of quarantine supply (and maybe doing a little bit of panic buying).

With the number of coronavirus cases in New Jersey topping 427 as of Wednesday, statewide restrictions are in place including a statewide curfew recommendation and the shutdown of schools, gyms, casinos and dine-in restaurant service. Officials are urging people to practice social distancing, meaning trips to the grocery store are limited.

As a result, meal prep businesses and companies producing hygiene and non-perishable supplies are thriving.

Eat Clean Bro, a Freehold-based meal prep and delivery service, has seen a major increase in requests, especially now that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it believes the coronavirus cannot be passed through food, said Jamie Giovinazzo, owner and founder.

"This time of year, we're very busy, so we're prepared to handle an influx of orders. But this is ... our orders are up 40%. We're

SEE BUSINESSES, A6

Eat Clean Bro, a Freehold-based meal prep and delivery service, has seen a major increase in requests, especially now that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it believes the coronavirus cannot be passed through food, its owner says. *Patti Sapone, for The Star-Ledger*

WASHINGTON

Trump taps emergency powers; Senate OKs relief bill

Jonathan Lemire and Jill Colvin
Associated Press

Confronting twin health and economic crises, President Donald Trump announced Wednesday he will invoke emergency powers to marshal critical medical supplies against a coronavirus pandemic threatening to overwhelm hospitals and other treatment centers. The Senate acted on the economic front, approving legislation to guarantee sick leave to workers sickened by the disease.

Trump described himself as a "wartime president" as virus cases surged and the markets fell, and he took a series of extraordinary steps to steady a battered nation, its day-to-day life fundamentally altered.

Most immediately, Trump said he would employ the Defense Production Act as needed, giving the government more power to steer production by private companies and try to overcome shortages in masks, ventilators and other supplies.

Trump also said he will expand the nation's testing capacity and deploy a Navy hospital ship to New York City, which is rapidly becoming an epicenter of the pandemic, and another such ship to the West Coast.

The Housing and Urban Development Department will suspend foreclosures and evictions through April. A growing number of Americans face losing jobs and missing rent and mortgage payments.

But as Trump laid out efforts to steady the economy, the markets plummeted. Gone were the last of the gains that the Dow Jones Industrial Average had made since Trump took office.

Administration announcements came

SEE TRUMP, A8

THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Statewide cases surge 61% to 427 with 5 deaths

Brent Johnson and Rebecca Everett
For The Star-Ledger

New Jersey has at least 427 coronavirus cases statewide, including five deaths, as officials announced 162 new positive tests Wednesday, showing a steady escalation of the outbreak as broad efforts to increase social distancing take hold.

"This is increasing with a pretty steep curve, as we expected," Gov. Phil Murphy said during a Wednesday afternoon briefing. "We have some amount of community spread as a part of this. This is a statewide reality."

Wednesday's update includes two new deaths in New Jersey from the virus that has infected more than 215,000 people and killed more than 8,200 across the globe.

"Both of these individuals were high-risk," state Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli said.

The victims were both women over 60 years old with underlying conditions, Persichilli said. One is from Essex County, the other from Hudson County.

The new figures came on a day when officials announced that the first widespread coronavirus testing site will open Friday in Bergen County.

The center will be located at Bergen County Community College in Paramus

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